

BROOK HARBOR

BY JEFFREY TOVES



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Brook Harbor



Jack, Tysen's new friend, went to Tysen's school last year and he got expelled for choking a kid nearly to death for looking at him funny. Jack was cool, but he was also the harbor's badass.

"Hey Jack," Trent asked, "You guys gonna grab weed or booze tonight?"

"I wasn't until I seen Tysen and now, we must!"

Jack's friends Camron and Devnel were the more popular Colter High kids and were the main party heads near the harbor. They usually kept things fun and interesting for the local kids. Devnel kept things fresh, as he was one of the few black kids in town.

Camron asked Trent, "Wanna head to the store?" The store owner was cool with them, and didn't mind selling to them as long as no one was in the store.

Tysen, Tac's cousin, shouted as Camron and Trent

went walking down the block, “Get me something special. I only got twenty bucks!”

The two walked up to the store near the jogging park up the road and waited for the store to clear.

They carried back a case of beer, a few wine coolers, and a big bag of tortilla chips and salsa. Camron and Trent caught their breath while the rest were hanging out dispersed and excited to get a buzz.

Devnel suggested, “Let’s go to the wharf and drink near the beach!” The rest looked at Devnel and basically ignored him.”

“Fine, if we’re gonna stay, I got shotgun on those chips!” Everyone started grabbing for the chips and salsa and started eating and drinking.

As the hour went by, Jack and Tysen were talking a lot and the group was jamming to Devnel’s boombox and telling stories.

When the evening matured, Tac said to Tysen, “I think we’re going to have to go soon, as I usually don’t stay too long when I come here.”

Tysen nodded in a “visiting” type of way.

“After this,” she said and gulped down her last wine cooler and they both left.

Walking back down the orange lit sidewalk, Tac asked Tysen, “So what’s up with you and Jack?”

“Jack is awesome, but I’ll admit he does have some real guy problems.”

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t know,” said Tysen. “He is not so nice as he is genuine.”

“Oh I see, you atleast like that he’s not a fake?”

“Yeah I guess,” Tysen sighed.

“I heard about the event last year,” Tac added, “and sheesh, hopefully he has calmed down.”

“Jack didn’t just choke him because of a look like rumors say. He did that because the kid was reckless and needed a dose of reality.”

“That makes sense.”

The duo snuck back into the house. It was dark, and they entered through the back where they left earlier. The two separated until morning.

At dawn, everyone was in the kitchen talking, as it was the summer thing to do. Tysen was eating waffles and eggs.

Tysen said to Tac, “We leave this evening, but you wanna check the gang later?”

“I’d be up for it,” Tac said. “But under one condition,” Tac continued, “No smooching!”

Tysen picked up a piece of her waffle and threw it at Tac. “No smooching it is!”

After breakfast Tac and Tysen left for the table, and upon approaching, saw Camron and Jack hanging out and drinking sports drinks.

Jack shouted to Tac, “You missed out. Trent and Devnel got into it. Trent kept pressing on Devnel’s

buttons. Devnel clocked Trent right on the nose. We broke it up but the two were heated. We all left with some beef in the air.”

“Holy cow, is Trent ok? Is his nose broken and where are they?”

“The two are still angry. I saw them earlier, and Trent is fine.”

“Tysen, you look shocked,” Jack said.

“No, just surprised that that happened. I hope I didn’t cause anything.”

“No way, dude, Devnel can get pretty crazy when he’s drunk,” Jack assured Tysen.

“We’ll grab more food and drinks. Maybe Tac and I will go,” Jack said, calming everyone down.

“Sounds cool,” Tysen replied.

“Shoot.” Jack held out his hand for chip ins and Jack and Tac went to the store.

Camron turned on the boombox and re-enacted the fight, showing how Trent looked when his nose got busted.

“Gross!” Tysen shouted.

“Indeed, we have our good days and our bad,” Camron agreed.

“Not just bad, it seems like his worst day ever.”

“So whats up with you and Jack? You guys look like you’re getting along well,” asked Cameron.

“I guess you can say that, but I live in Oceanside, and that’s like forever away.”

“That’s near where Jack used to live, but he hasn’t been back to his dad’s since the incident. I guess he’s happy being mama’s boy.”

Tac and Jack came walking up the sidewalk with the bags of food and drinks.

Jack yelled, “Partaaay!” and began to exhaustively lay out shrimp crackers, sushi, veggie sticks, and dip. “Impressed?” Jack asked Tysen.

“You harbor folk really like you’re seafood.”

“That aint nothin’ Tysen, this table ‘is’ the wharf!” Camron added in comedic justice.

Jack poked at Tac. “Hey Tac, why you always at the harbor? That place gives me the creeps. If what you mean by peaceful is stinky and creepy, then I must get your drift.”

Camron responded with a straight face, “We are all stinky and creepy here up in this place.”

They all laughed and continued their session.

The day was calm, seagulls flocked in the horizon, and the table was in good harmony.

“What’s with the harbor people being so harbory?” Camron began.

Tac responded, “It’s an ethic, like that peace I refer to. It’s nothing.”

“Yeah bro, so that makes us all beach buddhas,” Jack joked.

“Maybe not so much Buddha, but more along the lines of Jesus and two fish!”

Everyone laughed as Tac ate two big pieces of sushi.

As evening approached, Tysen and Jack were close. Tysen was wearing Jack's hat. Tysen poked at Jack's six pack through his red Billabong tee.

Tac yawned and shoved Tysen on her arm during the miniature beach romance and said, "Exchange digits already dummy before your parents leave you behind."

In suave grace, Jack wrote down his number on a small piece of napkin with a glancing hope for feedback.

Tysen, in a flirty tone, said, "You! If you want my number, you're going to have to remember it. If you don't, I guess I'm not that important. 661-7227."

That evening, Tysen went with her parents to Oceanside and left Tac and the gang to their devices. Later, Tac took a break from partying and went back to the harbor dock; his favorite place. He brought with him a can of sardines, a can of cola, and a flashlight. Walking up the pier, he set his stuff down, took off his shoes, and looked into the calm, moonlit sea. Tac closed his eyes, reached for his sardines, and ate to the sound of the soft breaking shore.

Tac Forberg went to Colter High and his best friend was Travis Donaway; a half white half Asian kid who towered over all the other kids at school. He stood six feet tall. Their favorite past time

was stealing donuts from the teachers lounge and competing with Jack and his boys for supremacy of the school. Tac and Travis had an edge that was cool but not anti-academic, although they could be academically rambunctious. Jack had his way with the girls, and so did his beta friends. The only time Tac and Travis got any action was at Jack's get togethers, so they won there.

The morning bell rang and Tac and Travis departed for class. Tac saw Jack coming down the hall.

"Hey Jack, awesome weekend! You get in touch with Tysen?"

"Yes, and were gonna be hanging out this weekend at the cove near the pine gates! If you and Trav wanna come, you're more than welcome."

"I'm down; we'll be there."

"Oh, another thing," said Jack, "we're all bringing camping gear and sleeping bags, so don't forget!"

"Sounds wicked," Tac responded in a hurry for class. "Gotta head bro, chemistry at 8:30."

"Okay brothaman, see you around," Jack said in departing.

"What makes Brad Pitt, Brad Pitt? I can pretty much guarantee it's Angolina bro," Devnel justified to Camron.

"No dude, Brad Pitt makes Brad Pitt, because he's Brad Pitt; trust me, it's not Angolina. It's Fight Club,"

Camron replied in debate. "Anyway, what are we bringing?" Camron asked Devnel.

Devnel smirked. "An ounce of that Cali; no more, no less."

"Sounds dank," Camron said, "but what about for the girls?"

Jack came down the hall unannounced with his weekend vigor, "Bro's what's the dealio? We ready for this weekend?"

Devnel and Camron just looked at Jack without equal excitement, and Devnel remarked, "Ready when you are," letting out a small smiling gasp, and continued, "but what are we bringing for the girls?"

Jack stood up straight like a gentleman and announced, "Vito's pizza, a calamari spread, a mini bar, and check this out..." Jack took out his wallet and showed them a picture of his portable sound system.

Camron jumped up and started going wild over Jack's plan. Devnel got up slowly and started to three sixty in the godly moment.

The whole school seemed to be excited about Jack's event. It spread like a Brook hill wildfire, and got the attention of many of the diffuse crowds at the school. The jocks, the nerds, the surf crowd; basically all the individualized groups were aware of the party at this point. The only one's who seemed not to be excited was the school personnel. Although, a few have shown up on various occasions.

These were usually family member's of attendees. They were usually cool and willing to throw back a few.

Tac



C olter High was a big school, but throughout the day, you could still make out all the activities of the students as they prepared for their extracurriculars. Some played basketball, some packed into small rooms for math or English club, and everything in between. Jack and his friends would meet up at the table after school, since the school was only five blocks from the wharf. Camron would often buy the drinks, since his father had a lot of money from working in the music business as a financial guru. He knew how to balance accounts and create new cash flows for the music market. Everyone called him Mr Fantastic because he wore an appearance that resembled a manikin, although he was really cool.

Devnel rode up on his BMX and met Jack and Camron sitting at the table.

"We're all here," Jack announced.

"Indeed we be," Devnel replied.

Camron got up and started to dance while sipping on his energy drink. Camron passed Devnel a sparkling cherry soda and sat down.

Jack walked over to the payphone near the bathroom structure by the table and was very excited to ring Tysen.

"Hello," Tysen answered.

"Hey it's Jack. So for the wondrous event, we have everything planned out!"

"That sounds impossible Jack! I'm excited, and so is my friend Laura," Tysen said in an overly mature voice. "I invited her since my parents didn't want me going alone."

"Sounds fine. Well, there should be a good male to female ratio no matter the case, but I will go ahead and keep Laura in mind," Jack assured Tysen.

Jack walked back to the table and told everyone that all is set and ready to boom.

Camron commented, "Any more fuel to the fire and I might have to call my dad to bring a fireman!" Everyone laughed.

Devnel jumped in and added, "Don't make me call my dad; he'll call a fireman, then call the popo's. And he hates popo's!"

The week went along as any other week in the harbor city and the clan was doing their day to day

in anticipation for a break from their natural cycles. Hour by hour, they did their assignments, finished their homework, and waited for the big day.

Tac shared a room with his nine year old brother Von. Tac was ready to party, but as an aside from his requirement of having to deal with little kid things. Tac never had a real relationship, but got close to girls at several parties, even some kissing action, and nearly dated one of them. Though, he chose school over the impending time requirements of such a situation.

“Knock, knock,” Travis knocked on Tac’s front door. Tac’s dad Randy answered.

“Hey Travis boy, looking tall there buddy,” to which Travis replied, “Yeah, but it doesn’t come with chest hair, sad to say.”

“I’ll get Tac,” Randy said with a smile.

As Travis was looking extra tall that day in his long basketball jersey, Travis got an alley oop when Tac came to the door.

“Now I get it when they call me shady,” Tac joked.

Travis and Tac decided to check the gang at the table, but upon arrival, Trent and a few of his friends were huddled around Jack and Camron. Jack saw Tac and waived at him to come over. As him and Travis inched their way closer to the table, the atmosphere started to change. It could be seen the fear in Jack and Camron’s eyes.

Trent spoke, "Hey Tac, you know my brother Parker. These are his teammates, Vince, Billy, and Joel. They play football together."

Tac and Travis nodded silently, being scared themselves as they knew what Trent was up to.

Camron interjected, "so apparently, Parker is bringing some cheerleaders, eh?"

Jack added, "I think that's all here. Drinks anybody?"

Trent was the same age as Tac, fourteen, and was pretty well known around the harbor. His dad worked at The Anchor Bar & Grill, one of the wharf restaurants, as a supervisor, so Trent spent a lot of time around the wharf and the main grounds.

Trent and his boys left the table in a subtle but tough way. You could smell the danger in them. All nearly six foot tall. However, Jack and Camron were no little boys, nor was tall Travis. Trent wanted to see if any of Jack's friends would fight for Devnel, but, it seemed the party was on everyone's minds more so.

The gang spent the next few days going about their business but patiently anticipating the party and campout. However, things took a sharp turn at the gym the night before the big day. Devnel was changing into clean clothes after his track and field practice in the locker room when he met up with Trent's big brother Parker.

“I know you and my little brother have some beef, Devnel.” Parker put his hand against Devnel’s locker and added, “We can settle this right now. If not here, in another place. I’m crazy, too. That’s my little brother, guy.” Devnel frowned hard, being much less blessed with muscle than Parker. Parker walked off, watching his own back the whole time. Devnel gazed into the gym floor in shock, his eyes wide open, brought nearly to tears. He stuffed all his stuff into his locker, zipped his red Jansport, and walked out of the locker room angry.

Time came. It was time for fun in the sun. The cove was the best spot for fishing and camping, and there just was nothing better. It was supposed to be an all out, wild adventure.

Tac and Travis borrowed Tac’s dad’s truck and packed it with all their gear.

“You ready?” asked Travis, driving cautiously and steadily to the spot.

“Ready as ever, and also, umm, watch the road, please!” Tac added. “When we get there, we can get as crazy and wasted as we want. For now, some music.” And off they went rockin’ Tac’s dad’s tapes, specifically Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

It was just past noon and everyone was preparing as Tac and Travis pulled up. Everyone was in their swimwear. The party was about half set up, and so Travis and Tac asked if they needed any help.

Jack welcomed them, "Wassup my people!"

Tac asked, "where is Tysen?"

"She's coming with her friend Laura before sunset. She is being dropped here by her aunt Vilma, since she lives nearby. Her parents rather this be the case."

"Shoot," said Tac. "I know Vilma. She stays near here. She lives up on the hill, right?" Tac commented.

The almighty Devnel is seen hanging out in the corner with his boombox in a sort of worried state. This made the party a little gloomy, so he was called on over to hangout and help Tac and Travis set up their tent.

Devnel replied, "No problemo my gentleman. I'm keeping my peace guys. I'm excited for the full sound setup. It should be awesome!"

"Indeed," Travis exclaimed. And just before everyone was into the party atmosphere, Trent and his crew roll up in a big, blue heavy-duty Jeep, blasting heavy metal music, drowning out Devnel's little boombox. They were all in tanks, and already gone and drunken.

Devnel bit his lip and asked Tac and Travis, "You guys got my back, right?"

Travis grabbed Devnel by the shoulder and looked him in the eye and said, "Devnel, don't worry about it. We know Trent; from around the harbor, dude. We'll make sure he keeps his cool."

“What about his brother and his friends?” Devnel asked.

“Well, this is our close friend Jack’s gig, and if they want to take it that far, then so be it,” Tac explained. “Plus, you should have thought twice before laying down a biggie smalls.”

Devnel smiled and shouted, “Then let’s get-a-partyin’!”

“What goes up must come down bro,” Travis continued. “If all is well and good, it will amount to nothing and all of us will do what we came to do. Party, right?”

An hour passed. It was nearing sunset, and Jack was done setting up. Like he said, there was a grandiose spread, a lot of beer and liquor, and a rockin’ sound system. Devnel was the most happy, and it was very obvious. He was the first to get up and start dancing with the girls, and to jump in the water. Soon after, everyone jumped in the clear, blue ocean, and the party was officially on.

Two very pretty girls in bathing suits came walking down from a drop off above the cove near the road. It was Tysen and Laura who just got dropped off by Tysen’s aunt Vilma who lives near the cove. You could see the excitement in Jack, and it seemed the whole party stopped and smirked. Jack ran up to Tysen and grabbed her by the hand. Jack was shirtless, wearing blue board shorts and surf jewelry,

and looked very groomed. He hadn't yet got into the water. Tysen giggled, looking at Laura.

As Laura smiled along with everyone, Tac jumped in as Tac does and introduced Laura to Travis. Travis became very shy and looked down slightly, but this didn't negate his charm.

Trent and his brother were at bay the whole time up until Devnel got totally wasted. He started very early and was quite tipsy by sunset. He was all over the place and yelled a manly roar several times from the beach toward Trent's brother Parker. "Wassaaapp bro? Want some? Come get some!" Devnel shouted.

Tysen rushed in laughing, protecting Devnel, as he was no match to a buttload of football players, but Devnel hilariously refused. He pushed Tysen at the forehead, requiring Travis to calm Devnel down a tad bit. "Hey man, that's not cool. I thought we had an agreement!"

Parker stood, hovering with his chest out looking directly at Devnel.

This time Jack stepped in. "Hey man, I don't want no trouble here," Jack explained to Parker.

Parker remarked with a sharp smile, "No way, I'm just having fun like everyone else, but I do have to protect my people and my little brother, bro. However, on another note, I aint no wuss, and I aint goin' to let Devnel get away so easily with that

foul play.”

Trent stood up and backed up his brother, feeling confident after Parker’s display. “Yeah Jack, what’s up?”

Jack smirked and made a fist, but let go in a passion, sighing. Jack then replied, “Definitely don’t make me look like a wuss at my own party, either!”

“Naw, Jack. You’re the man here. We’re just tryna have fun, too,” backing off in an understanding way.

Jack responded in some relief, “Don’t worry about Devnel, he’s not really like that. He’s like one of the funniest guys here. Give him a break.”

Tysen grabbed Jack by the hand and said, “let’s walk it off.”

Travis looked at Laura and smiled. He mumbled from the corner of his mouth, “heh? Want to walk?”

Tac explained to them, “go ahead, I’m a harbor kid. I’m tough with this stuff,” fake crying.

Tac walked over to the cove by himself with the loud music in the background, sat, and watched the party from a distance. He smirked and thought to himself, “what a week! All this trouble and we finally got to this stinkin’ party. So much trouble. Atleast Tysen’s safe. And Travis. Hopefully in both ways, and we still have a whole night to go.”

He closed his eyes and meditated to the soft crashing shore. After a few minutes, he stood up, dusted off the sand, and walked back to the party.

As Tac approached his setup, Laura and Travis came running in their swimsuits half naked, wet and laughing. Tac grinned at Travis in support. Travis smiled back in pure joy.

“What the hell, I might as well enjoy myself,” Tac thought to himself. Tac went over to Devnel’s crowd and sat near one of Devnel’s lady friends. “Meet Whitney,” Devnel mumbled in drunken speech. Tac grabbed a Budweiser from the case and threw an oldschool toke-signal for ‘spark it up.’ Devnel got up and danced to the opening of his backpack. He said once again, “An ounce; no more, no less.” He broke out a rolled joint for Tac.

Whitney smiled at Tac and said, “Spark it!”

That night, Tac got pretty wasted with Devnel and his little circle. He couldn’t even get back to his tent, and when he woke up, Whitney was sleeping on his lap. The two got up and they both smiled at each other. Tac took his best shot and asked her, “So, umm, you wanna ‘dance with somebody?’ Tac grabbed an empty beer can and started, “The clock strikes, upon the hour, and the sun begins to fade.”

She laughed.

“Wanna explore the cove?” Tac asked. Whitney agreed and off they went. Tac walked Whitney through his peaceful process as they walked up the northern bend. He asked her to close her eyes and focus on the soft, breaking shore. She happily agreed

and started to get goosebumps, as Tac's romance was like nothing she had ever experienced. She couldn't help it anymore. She grabbed him by the head, looked at him in his big green eyes, then kissed him passionately. Tac followed along. The night was perfect. The party was over.

Adulthood



It was another Friday and Tac felt especially great. “I wanna go out tonight!” Tac told to himself with a confused look, “I have absolutely no money!” He burped and proceeded to impatiently call up his mom Rory to ask her for fifty bucks, while shaking from his energy drink.

“Mom, can you spare fifty until payday?”

She was able to send it. Tac shouted, “Yeeeah-hhsss!” but his dad Randy was not so happy. He called Tac and gave him the MoneyGram code, attached to a little advice.

“Tac, get an extra job. Our bills are nothing compared to yours, so please understand this.” This didn’t stop Tac from staying excited that day. Tac and his posse headed off to Genie’s Pub downtown near the wharf. They went in, and proceeded to ask for a round from a waitress in a pink swim top. His

friends bought him a round. Tac didn't have to pay.

"Woohoo!" Tac thought to himself, "I seriously ain't buyin' it, though. What is it? Gas money? Gas station food? Is that what I do?" His friends silently nod at him with a raised brow in his adult life training scenario. Then it clicked. "They were raised by their fathers more! This man thing is where it's at with them," slightly palming his face. Tac told himself, "man stuff," and then wondered why he sucked at this. "Everything and nothing equates to my worth in their eyes probably," Tac continued, "but, that's gourmet."

Tac arrived at home, and without washing up, he got comfortable in his garage setup. He pressed the garage door opener to close the door and turned on his mini heater.

"What a great night," he mumbled in relative drunkenness. In the back of his mind, like a phantom tumor, the emergent visual gunk and denial settle in his presence on that weekend midnight.

"But, I love the world!" Tac thought with a mature face, "and love is everywhere, and I am a part."

Tac was now twenty four, living in an old, wooden beach side condo, two miles from the wharf. He loved life, but everything was so much more complicated than how it used to be. Bills, working as a low waged hardware store clerk, and keeping up with social life. It's wasn't the same.

Growing up, Tac spent so much time looking around for fun and ways to make him cooler, and almost no time on making himself the best he could be. This was the reason for Tac's mishaps and intensity. When he took the plunge to become a better person, along with a few of his friends, there was no turning back.

Tac wasn't totally unaware of what it was to be a good citizen, as his mom and dad were big helpers of the homeless, and filled substitute teacher roles and parent led activities, and always made sure their kids were ok. This was taken for granted until his late teens. He joined bad kids, drank and smoked weed, and got into fights every so often. Also, he knew how to fight, as his mom and dad enrolled him in Boxing and Karate at the local Boys & Girls Club when he was ten. Tac won several semi-pro youth fights, too, but this tough boy orientation was used for many detrimental activities, such as pursuing fun, drinking with the gang, and getting into trouble with his best friend Travis. All of this before he hit eighteen.

Around this time, Tac discovered the Law of Attraction. He became a more positive and less disturbed person. He learned about the local marina and fisheries sciences, engendered a love for people, spent much time working with local fisherman and boat mechanics, and boat owners, too. With

this newfound knowledge and positive thinking, he made a name for himself near the harbor as a peaceful kid. He stayed nearby the harbor all his life.

All Tac knew was that he wanted something bigger. Tac tended to sum up the ways of the world. Often, also, Tac told the story best.

Tac's friend rattled him from his gaze toward the ocean as he sipped on his iced coffee.

"Lorraine, why is it that people don't just swim all the time? I think the world would be better if people swam more often," Tac elaborated after watching a bunch of kids swimming and playing.

"I don't know. I guess there is too much to do. Plus, swimming is sort of dirty. That's how I feel when I go to the beach," Lorraine explained.

"So does that mean you think I'm a stink?" Tac asked.

That is certainly what I'm saying, you stink head," Lorraine joked. "Yes Tac, I know what you mean. Then again, you like the ocean, and people like me, we like the mall!"

Tac replied in a cute way, "yeah to buy bathing suits to never wear ever!"

The next day, Tac looked down at the floor, groggy because his body needed water.

Tac only ate Fig Newton last night and had a few sips of Sprite since then. "What it is to be human," Tac thought as he walked outside. "7-11 is there,

sort of bright and awesome looking in the morning.” Tac walked in, but was confused at all the selections. He didn’t have the greatest idea of what he should be putting in his body. He was still too young for that “gourmet” ethic.

He heard, “I want these,” from a kid in the corner. Tac looked and thought, “Ooh, I sort of want that, too!” staring at M&M’s. Tac went to work on a 7-11 egg muffin and worked a five hour shift.

Before getting off, a customer carted in a large package, complaining about a greenhouse she bought the other day. The lady went, “I paid \$495 online and I thought it was glass. Instead, it came with a plastic mess!”

“The glass version is \$995 and it says it on the website.” Tac opened up the web browser for the store, www.BrookHarborHardware.com, and showed her the options on the order form.

The lady sighed, “Oh my, I didn’t know that! Well, I really wanted the glass one. Can you just put the difference on the card?” and handed Tac her Mastercard. Tac finished up, and told the woman that the package would be dropped off by tomorrow. Tac leaned on the hardware table in a “happy to help” kind of way, and said to her, “I’d want the glass one, too!”

Tac began thinking of his future before clocking out as he had class after work. Tac thought to

himself, "Once I finish, no more hardware store or glass versus plastic! I'll be outta here!"

Pineridge Community College was just a short drive away; half a mile from his work. He arrives and finds a place to smoke a cigarette.

"Got a light," Tac is asked by a student. They stood near eachother until they both realize that Brook Harbor was just too busy for chit chat. They wandered away from eachother, and like flamingos, stared at the traffic.

Tac remembered, "Yesterday! I was to sign up for the library. There's just too much campus!" There were many students at the community college. Many people, but Hobbesian contracts kept everyone perfectly distant in academic harmony. A wonderful feeling could be felt in the air.

What to eat today was a chore for Tac. "Red meats are bad," he thought. His friend Jordan was hovering around their next class and offered him a pizza. A cheese and sausage one.

"If there is no red meat, I'll take it," Tac said.

His friend Jordan replied, "but you need meat. Unless you're one of those health buffs!"

He staggered a bit and replied, "You bet your ass I'm one of those!" However, in his proceeding silence, he sighed at his nutritional imbalances. "Peace is what I want! Food is whatever. It is a good day I seek," Tac hinted to himself. His friend

knew this about him. Jordan replied with his distant look, "Well then take out the meat." Tac proceeded to pry the meat and eagerly consumed the pizza like a hungry animal.

Jordan left with a trail of thought about people like Tac. "Tac stays positive and reminds himself, 'even though our day is shallow and spiteful and our minds are preoccupied, there is a real humanity in the background.' Tac's problem is his diet! Too picky if you ask me. He is just too much his own character to make too large of changes in too short a time."

It was another day for Tac, and work and school kept him busy. Tac wanted more for himself. He worked as hard as he could, but he always felt the world was moving too fast for him. He would say this in a myriad of ways.

Change



Tac always gave when asked. The Bible says, “Ask and you shall receive.” Something Tac began paying attention to. Little did Tac know, however, the true importance of such an ethic. His friends surely did! They would ask, “Can you show me how to sign up?” or “Can I borrow fifty bucks?” Tac would sigh and give. It was a good ethic on their part. Tac wanted to be more like them. So he tried. He just one day got up and went to the local indoor flea market and asked an elderly Mexican gentleman, “do you mind if I leave some tools here to sell on consignment? I will give a ten percent cut.”

“Sure,” the vendor said.

“What? It worked!” Tac whispered to himself.

Tac went about his day in this sort of manner. He asked a woman standing outside what the time was right away. And in his mood, he told her that

he was ‘a happy man.’ “I just got my products on consignment here.”

She smiled and asked, “What’s consignment?”

“It’s when you put your product in another business’s shelf for a cut.”

“Interesting,” the woman noted with a confused smile. Tac, in his charm, continued his day in perfect harmony.

Tac arrived at home, proceeded into his kitchen, and broke out a hunk of ham. He cut it into the types of shapes he wanted; specifically, like bacon strips. At this point, often his libido would push him to require some company, but not tonight! He’s was going to read a book! He’d read blogs and search the web on his mobile, but this time he started on something more serious. Halfway through his reading of a book on King Arthur, he got the idea, “Maybe I don’t read so often because I am not as logical as I would like to be.” Tac opened up the browser on his computer and typed into Youtube, “Science and Math.” Tac’s eyes became like grapefruits, seeing, “Learn quantum physics in 3 hours!” Tac spent the next several hours coming to grips with a cat in a box and what a particle was.

Tac came to a point of no return. As if he was Einstein himself coming to conclusions about the universe. His life changed at that moment when he found that a light particle, a photon, can both exist

and not exist! Dark matter was just photons, or light particles, that for some reason didn't exist! Tac told himself, "Growing up at the harbor all my life and these were the constituents of my reality..." Tac soon stumbled toward his bed nearby and fell face first in his pillow with ideas of numbers and concepts taking him to sleep.

"What is it with so many people in the city, so busy, and going, going, going? Maybe I just never got an essential nutrient of life," Tac pondered. "Some atomic element that is a fuel of life," he continued. "Maybe I'll try harder, and this time it will be better," he thought. "And just go," but then he thought, "It must be more than that, though!" He walked down to the local indoor flea market again and asked the vendor, "Did you happen to sell any of the products I put out? I can give 20% if needed to sell!"

The older, Mexican gentleman replied, "Ok, so how about just the screwdriver sets?"

Tac smiled, took the drill bits, multitools, and hammers, and walked out, feeling accomplished that moment.

"I did it!" he thought once more. Tac just went, but he began to also get the sense that the world wanted his involvement. The world liked him. Tac shot straight his opinion and didn't wait to establish his ideas. "I like those shoes." "I think you're better off without the hat!" "I want salad." Again he followed

this pattern. It was a new streak for Tac to learn the ways of the world. The first formulations he naturally proceeded with were his own beliefs and ideas. "What really is this thing called life?" Tac began demanding as a young twenty four year old. "Maybe that is what is going on in this fast paced world in general! People are going to lend their hand and simply engage in community. That is how precious and dynamic life is!" Ask and you shall receive took on another meaning that day. When his friends asked to borrow money or to help with a project, now he saw that it was not often a small thing, nor an odd task they were pursuing.

He could see the sunset at the end of the road before the hill. It said, "Here we go. On we go to jet to what it is that makes us happy." He remembered the old times he had with Travis, Jack, Tysen, Devnel, Camron, Trent, and all the gang. He thought of them with his fresh outlook.

"We partied because it was what we wanted to do, and everyone loved participating! I was a tad bit more scholarly than the gang, and that's because that is how I benefited the world," he thought to himself. "The kids around us were in groups because that is how they were. Their straight to the point, no nonsense, human setting was to play basketball, or study, or dance," he continued on his streak. "Thus, it only makes sense that my heart rests at the harbor

and the ocean. What have I been doing my whole life?" He added, "life used to be so easy; then it got so complicated, and now I'm right back where I started."

"Hey, what is up?" Tac asked his neighbor Charlie.

"Oh nothing. There's a gathering at my work tonight. Wanna come?"

"Sounds fun."

"Yeah, so it's at 330 Liverpool Road, across from Albertsons, downtown, if you wanna come," as he flipped through a map app on his phone.

"Shoot," Tac replied. They departed in a cheerful mood, with their sights set on some nightlife.

Tac arrived, getting off the express near Albertsons in downtown Brook Harbor. Charlie saw Tac from outside the gate and called him, "Over here, man!" He let Tac through, and continued, "Meet the crew. This is Tom, our chief programmer, and Michael, a leading designer at the firm."

"Please to meet you guys," Tac remarked in a just-off-the-street kind of way. They all grinned in silence, gripping their cups of beer. They seemed to have the same ideas that Charlie and Tac were having of fun, but without the fuel or patience.

"How to break this ice?" Tac wondered. Following his straight to the point attitude, he said, "Let's go talk to that group over there." Little did he know, the party was mostly all spoiled rich kids.

They all laughed and Michael blurted, "The company is trash with talking to chicks, man. They'll stamp us later for misconduct and hit us with a guilt trip."

"Oh," Tac thought. His idea of being an awesome straightshooter went right out the window there.

"But," Charlie responded, "There is a lounge upstairs we can check out."

They all agreed.

They made their way into the lounge and Tom began to talk to some girls in the corner as they asked for their orders.

The crew made it over to Tom, but suddenly Michael bursted out, "What the heck is going on my man, Tom?" in a mean and belligerent way. It looked as if Tom and Michael had some sort of conflict going on. Charlie and Tac continued to watch, and Tom responded, "nothing brother, just making up for all them girls we left behind."

Michael shot back, "Girls and the 970 report you darn wrecked last week because you're a lazy idiot, ha!" Tom grinned, but they shook hands; however, in a sort of speedy, squirrel like way. In Tac's mind, a fight was about to break out. But nothing.

Tac thought in the spur of the moment, as a new pop song started to play, "I seriously don't understand these people. Their environment is like this? Like how athletes are sometimes? Hmm,

maybe it's not anyone's attitude except the attitude of their environment?" Tac continued in his thought, "And for me never being there," with his glass of beer raised.

Tac got home that night and decided it was time. It was the best night to go back to the harbor. His fresh ideas were making him feel the love for life again, and so he washed up, grabbed some food, threw on his backpack, and drove down to the harbor a few miles away.

"Aaahhh," he let out as he stepped out onto the harbor parking lot, remembering the atmosphere (although the lights now blueish). He made his way to the dock and sat on the rocks nearby, opened up his bag, and took out his Doritos and Vienna sausage can. He smiled big as the small waves crashed softly on the rocks. He ate two chips to honor his love for the sea.

Magic



Tac slept in his garage again and he couldn't figure why it was so hot. The heater was on, and it was also keeping hot the pillow he was using. He yawned and told himself comedically, "Simple. It's probably just not going to be a good day!" Inspiration from Merlin as he looked forward and blinked like a creature. Tac was referring the teacher of King Arthur of Camelot who was raised by Merlin in a forest until he was a teenager. Merlin often did the opposite thing.

"It is not, and so it is." Tac picked up his blanket with his left hand in a robotic way, put opposite socks on, and walked sideways toward the garage door. He opened the garage, and it was so hot because it was very sunny outside.

"Now it is not hot! As I have steadily raised the bar in life to change my life settings," he said to himself.

Tac took his dog Brando around the block for a walk, and as he was pooping, he looked upward in respect for Brando's privacy. Another dog walker passed.

The guy asked, "What kind of dog?"

Tac replied, "He is a Pit to me, but I honestly think he is only part Pit. I got him from folks I met at a fundraiser. The money helped their friend get prosthesis."

"Oh, really?" the walker replied.

"And yours?" Tac asked in return.

"Part Pit, but he has some Rottweiler."

"Oh, nice."

Tac pet the man's dog and continued on his way. Tac thought about his impression while squinting his way forward. "But, in the spirit of Merlin, who cares!" Tac thought. The day was nothing, then made a bit magical. In that, change occurs through honesty, which turns into a continuous positivism. "Who's to say that anything is too much as long as we are honest? Our private lives are cloudy with rainstorms. Only peace should survive," Tac assured himself.

"Black magic is the culprit!" Tac growled to himself, gritting his teeth while walking Brando back to the condo. "That is an evil culture with the aim of looking at people with devilish eyes."

Tac assured himself of control over his power by

saying, "There is no magic but the magic of Camelot. If there ever was, then magic can kiss my butt! And I hope their wands get confiscated. Love is all there is!" Tac landed back at his condo with a slight disgust for black magic practitioners. He put Brando inside and gave him a treat and furiously stepped on dry leaves to get around to his garage. He looked at his surfboard hanging on the wall, and told himself, "There is no place like home," throwing a hang loose sign to all the dark energy out there.

Tac performed a scan of the crowd at the Harbor Mall. An adult, but still up for contact. Yet, there existed no one as he stood there at center court. At least at the moment. He stopped looking and continued to buy his lunch. He walked over and bought some Chinese fast food.

He asked, "Two choice, with tea." She replied, "No tea, only Coke."

Tac got a little upset, but controlled his temper in his modern humanity.

"Maybe I can get tea elsewhere," he thought as he calmed himself. Tac continued with his order, now needing a fork.

Again, though, the lady replied, "Only chopstick."

He grit his teeth. "Ok, no tea, no fork, so then what?" he asked himself. "Maybe this food sucks," Tac thought, situating. Then he tried to explain it away, "This is just how I feel. Else, me get very angry

at woman!" Tac paid the bill. It was twelve dollars! He got a two choice, a side of soup, and some fortune cookies.

As he walked over to the booth next door, he tightly gripped the top of his Chinese bag of food and asked, "Tea?" "Only with order," the lady expressed to him. Then he asked for a napkin.

She said, "Ok."

A booth over, he tried again, "Have tea?"

"Yes, Brisk Raspberry."

"I'll take it," he said with an angered look.

"I don't feel good right now," he told himself. "I know I'll meet a real bad one, and then maybe the universe will situate my perfect iced tea," he pondered. "But, I'll be met with more anger," he realized. "Maybe not. Maybe a little painful reality is what I need. I'll keep to my desires and hope that this imbalance is settled with my meal."

Tac sat down and ate his meal near the mall entrance. He watched people walking in and out but soon noticed his old friend Devnel walking into the mall with his partner.

"Devnel?" Tac shouted in time before he passed.

Devnel looked over surprised and said, "Oh sziiiit! My homey! Tac the beach macketty zig zag pac!" Tac laughed with a noodle hanging out the side of his mouth.

"This is Barbara."

“Nice to meet you Barbara.” Tac added, “So what do you find interesting about Devnel? I’ve known him since we were kids, but I haven’t seen him since our friend Jack came back from Hawaii. I bet it’s you like his sense of humor, right?”

“Well, he says a lot about you guys when we’re around the harbor. Devnel is Devnel, I guess. I like his sense of humor for sure; but tell me no more, because we must enjoy tonight. We’re going to watch Cyber Wars and I don’t want to leave him just yet,” Barbara joked.

“Well, lucky you two. Cyber Wars and a theater frankfurter is better than this stupid Chinese food. I paid twelve bucks and they didn’t have tea. Ask Devnel. He’ll tell you how much pride we have in our drinks!”

Barbara laughed.

“Devnel added; yeah drinks, but don’t tell her about the other pride,” he joked.

“And what is that?” Tac asked smiling.

Devnel let out a big “Haah,” and said with a straight face, “chicks.”

“Funny man Devnel you are. I miss you a lot, bro. Please keep in touch if you can. I go to the dock every once in a while and think about old times.”

Tac and Devnel shook goodbye and they both smiled big at each other before departing. Devnel released a farewell wink at Tac before turning into

the main mall walkway with Barbara.

"My apartment is relatively clean. A sort of dirty clean. Still clean," Tac went over in his mind. Tac got a call from his old friend Travis.

Travis yelled through the phone seeming very excited, "Broseph, do I got a plan for us tonight!"

"Sure, what is it?"

"Animal house party at Harlem Street, here in Pineridge!"

"What kind of party is it?"

"A darn beast party!"

"Hmm," Tac wondered. "I'm up for it."

They hang up.

Travis and Tac's old highschool buddy Lorraine picked up Tac at his condo, operating as the designated driver. She was very mean the whole way to the party, but she still had a good heart, and she was seriously down to help everyone have fun.

Travis, Lorraine, and her friend Jan, and Tac all got down and went in to the party. When they stepped into the fraternity type house, there were couches full of drunk people smoking and drinking. Travis asked a host, "Where's the bar area?"

The host replied, "No bar; all cases in the fridge. It's over there."

Tac smirked, which eventuated into a sarcastic face. "I was expecting a traditional party," Tac thought to himself, "but it is, I guess, a wild animal

house party!”

Two big males were guarding the liquor near the fridge, and Tac just blurted out, “Wassup, passing through!” Tac grabbed four beers. This usually worked for Tac.

One of the guys stopped Tac and said, “and put your trash in the garbage!”

Tac eeked a little and thought, “What a douche!” However, “No pain no gain was the deal of the day,” Tac took into account.

The big guy looked Tac in the eye and said, “Ok?” in a mocking way, making a dorky mouth shape.

Tac shot back, necessarily, and asked, “so where’s the garbage?”

The big man laughed and said, “I don’t know, all around...”

Travis was watching this all from a short distance, feeling an alpha situation coming up. But to Travis, it was nothing they couldn’t handle. They were harbor kids. Tac said, “Well, alright. I got your drift homeboy.”

The guy laughed again and chanted, “Beast, beast, beast, beast!”

Tac was a bit shocked and amazed. He wanted to get on his side a little. So he did. It was a get up and fight situation for Tac. Tac then chanted with him. “Beast, beast, beast, beast!” Tac was not backing down.

The guy's friend joined in and put his arm over Travis's shoulder and shouted, "Partaaaay!" Tac started to love it a little, in a sort of mischievous way. Both of the big guys then turn to the party and just start running through everyone in pure fun.

"What am I doing with my life?" Tac thought. "I guess I never partied like a true animal!"

Tac and Travis got back to their people and the party was started. It was an animal house! And now Tac and Travis were party animals, taught by true party animals. Tac pondered, "How do I go all out party animal?" Tac watched the people partying all night. He mimicked their moves for the crazy night, and had a few vodka shots with Travis. When the night was over, all the men were cleaning. "Awesome party," Tac said before heading out with his friends.

One responded, "You're very welcome," in the most mature and refined tone. And comments, "Good looking crowd. Hey, do you happen to have a cigarette?"

Tac wondered, "What exactly is manly to this guy?" in his innocent vibe. Tac felt less man. "If beast is man, then I might be wrong," thinking in his intoxicated state, handing over his last cigarette to this strong man.

"Get out of here already, you're stinking up the place with your lack of cigarettes," he said with a big, grinning face.

Tac just gave him the brow and walked off, paying little attention to the guy's negation, as Tac was relatively immune to this beast mode already.

It was a changing moment that whole beast party. Tac knew what he was as he awoke the next day. He also pissed himself because his beast mode status, however. "I'm nice, talented, and educated," he thought. "Should I be more like them or should I be what it is that I am?" Tac's friend Travis stopped by to see how he was doing, since it was such a harsh night.

He said, "Bro, that was a crazy party, huh?"

"Travis is probably awaiting an honest response, but I guess I was not man enough," Tac thought to himself. "It was fun, but the negative aura of evil beast vibes took over," he said to his close friend Travis, poking at himself. "All I could think was my skinny body," Tac laughed. Travis seemed to know this and overtook Tac with a, "Don't worry bro, I had a crazy night, too," approach as if he knew what Tac was thinking. Tac told Travis, "It made me think like an animal. Next time, no jocks!"

Travis replied, "no jocks it is. And may I add. No crackheads, also, because I feel a little cracky today. It's probably just the 'Monster' energy drink I just drank, but still," Travis remarked, making an intelligent connection. They smiled at their united charm. They felt better together talking about these

sorts of things.

“That’s what friends are for,” Tac thought. They were alone in the ideas of Wallstonecraft. Their habits were theirs, and that is what they projected. Simple. “Any dumb beast coming from me is a fad,” Tac said to himself as they became confident in their unique manliness.

Travis continued, “Yeah man, and I’m seriously down for whatever, but let us atleast set the bar at no floating poop in the pool, k?”

Tac added, “Or silent piss.”

Travis laughed hard, “Let’s not go too far!”

That night, they all shook at the sight of the fungus. It was like it was looking at them as they pondered on the upcoming event. All Tac could think was his college party skills in relation to what was about to go down.

“That’s not something that I know,” Tac thought to himself. “I know I should be a man. But versus what?” he added to his list of worries. “Manliness is not going to help me fly like superman. Thus, dilute myself. Dilute everything with water. In fact, dilute the diluted, for any parts per million decrease is a good biological principle.” Then they handed Tac orange juice. Tac began to trip and his first words: “Dumbledore.” He felt like a cosmic man with the world having undiscovered territory. He couldn’t speak.

He looked in the mirror and saw a fairy. She just flew on by. He was in awe at the potential of the human mind. He tried to walk around. He saw beings that were his friends, but also like alien lifeforms. He could not speak to them for he would disturb their peace.

Positivity here was interesting, for all he could think was, “Be nice, be good, be cool.” This extremity stilled his fear to some degree. The overcoming was to be himself. Do what it is that he was. He eventually went to sleep and awoke hours later in a gloomy state with a technicolor world before his eyes. An aftertrip that gave details to this other world. It said things like, “Life has this in it.” He was shocked at life and the world like never before, in an odd way, for there were things about man that were shocking of which he didn’t know; he just knew of the effects of weed, liquor, and anxiety pills. He stayed positive with shrooming within the grasp of anyone. All Tac could do was tell himself, “what on earth did I just do?”

“Life changes and gets better or worse,” Tac thought. He was beginning to learn as an adult. “I feel this is too much,” Tac said to himself. “All those stupid Youtube drug videos are no bull. There really is reason to check out these fascinations. That is because of this type of stuff. Certain media, like internet video, is as low class as you can get,

but the world is paying attention.” Tac continued, “There’s probably a kid in the world right now making an internet video to explain to me these same experiences. His video is probably just a squawking about hallucinating in the woods; it’s fun, it’s super epic! And what he is saying has a reality to it; simply. And it’s useful, because he’s the perfect dude for the job. What a world we live in,” Tac concluded as he sobered up, jumping on his mobile to do some research.

“What in the world is that?” Tac shouted to his friend Charlie, still relatively high the day after their shroom adventure.

Charlie responded, “A darn squid.” On the ground lay a squid looking organism, but looked more so like a sea monster. Tac argued it was a monster, half joking, but partially serious. Tac took out his phone camera to take a picture and his hand received a shock. His phone fell in the sand.

He shouted, “Holy cow, it is a monster demon! It electrocuted my phone!”

Charlie started, “No way bro, I think these float up around this time!”

“You calling me a wacko?”

“Naw man, I just know bro.”

“I do, too, but how often do these things electrocute phones though, bro?”

Charlie went into silent mode, but finally com-

mented, "I don't know but you do sound like a wacky Tac right now."

Tac left for the sidewalk holding his broken, electrocuted phone, angry.

A few hours later, Tac saw Charlie and they chatted about the phone and squid creature.

Charlie started, "That's a dumb, evil squid," in a funny and cute way.

Tac remembered the anger coming out of himself and remarked, "Oh, like I don't know what you're going to say?"

They started talking about other topics, but it felt as if their relationship got damaged along with Tac's phone.

Realizing this, Tac, in his nerd voice, squeaked, "According to my calculations, the coordinating events made me think as wacky Tac, so to reach nash equilibrium, I must ask, could we agree to disagree?"

Charlie smiled and said, "Yes, of course Digi Tac V1."

When Tac was seventeen, he and Travis went on a boating trip near the cove to see dolphins and whales. Midway, Travis slipped on a puddle of water and sand Tac left from snorkeling. Tac was sort of a bully that day and didn't pay much attention to his own actions. Tac even almost drowned Travis when they were wrestling in the deep water at the edge of the boat. Travis swallowed a bunch of salt water and

cried when he got to the deck. Travis got very angry at Tac, and told him to be careful with that way of his. Tac responded with his usual ways, “Oh man, I’m sorry dude, pardon me.” Travis assessed himself and saw that he had to change. Tac for the next few days acknowledged Travis’s newfound perceptions. Tac remembered this moment, and looking back, he felt bad. “The pain still sits as fresh as ever,” Tac started to think as he and Charlie were making up.

Friends



“**B**uddha said a lot of things, but he got there by the force,” Tac explained.

“What, like in Star Wars?” Tac’s friend Bruce commented.”

“Yeah, but in Asia, they call it the way,” Tac explained after shooting Charlie’s teammate. “The way of nature will always lead you home. Buddha essentially says to set everything down so we can live in the moment with nature.”

Bruce replied, strangling the controller, “But Jesus says to be righteous, ask for your daily bread, and smile at your enemies. This also looks like a way.”

Tac swiftly answered, “Jesus claimed to be the son of god, and so god was like ‘the way,’ and the father was forgiving, like nature is forgiving.”

Bruce nodded.

Bruce then lowered his controller and snickered,

“I don’t know about all that, but I think there is a higher power of some sort.”

Tac replied, “That is a good principle, for it is like Socrates who knows no thing. What he knows is that people are better than him at certain things, and his unknowing corresponds to his honesty and knowing himself. His friends knew better than him, but at the end of the day, Socrates knew best because his main principles were about judging himself correctly.” Tac continued, “The stoics, post Socrates, and Zeno of Citium, believed in ridding irrational desires. The stoic life is one of necessity and the now.”

Bruce shot back with an AK-47 and replied, “That sounds like my dad.”

Tac laughed and said, “Mine too! I guess we’re all a little stoic.”

“So what’s your point, Tac?”

“My point,” said Tac, “is that the ancients were awesome and cured much of our academic pains.”

“That’s obvious,” Bruce remarked.

“Really?” Tac said. “What do you mean?”

Bruce smiled and said, “Life is like a box of chocolates, for real, as in, it’s all different, but the same, as it’s all still encapsulated by chocolate, like our life is filled with pain. They help cure us,” Bruce followed as he threw a grenade into a building.

Tac agreed. “Wow, so much for Zeno,” changing

his weapon.

Bruce continued, "Yeah, man, I have a basic idea of the underworld, and of harmony, and yeah, it's like the yin and yang as you say. It's just a part of life."

"How does that go again?" Bruce asked.

"Well, for every action there is an equal but opposite reaction, or strong yang and soft yin. Yang is a resistance to begin to be overcome first by yin, and then an opposing yang when it is achievable. Wax on, wax off, ya know," Tac eloquently explained.

"Anyway Bruce Lee, I know I started it, but forgive me. I think we just manifested a dojo already."

Bruce replied, "Done?"

"Well, in the writings of Plato, Socrates just gets it. I guess you followed the right way sensei."

"Ya know, life as a grown up is so different from when we were kids," Tac added to the conversation.

Bruce, in his now confident vibe, responded maturely and said, "We don't have those same luxuries that we once had. Life is littered with people who think they own you and you must try to reason with this." Tac agreed and shook Bruce's hand firmly and thanked him for the good dose of reality and game sesh.

"Party tonight! A lot of people are going," Travis mentioned after stopping by Tac's pad later that day.

"I hope there is lager and free food," Tac said to

himself, alluding to the free party benefit. The two agreed to go and shook on it. They had to check each other for their proper beast face first, though. And for Tac, a whole scenario.

Upon getting dressed, Tac mumbled to himself, “Gel or no gel, hat or no hat, sweater or coat. No to sweater, since I don’t want to look suspicious! Hide my tattoo? Yes, so I don’t look doubly suspicious! How about my breath? Hmm... Does it look like I live unhealthily? Nope, check. Hold on; like, as in, in a germ free environment? Whoops. People hate viruses! Nope. Just slight dirt on everything; check.”

Upon their evening arrival, a pack of hairy wolf men stared down Tac and his crew from their tail gate. They shouted, “Whoop, whoop,” like a cop car. Tac and his friends entered the gate of the house and everyone was wearing beads and playing drinking games, dancing, and everything else. They situated themselves, and Travis and his friend Marie held out until Tac found their crowd. Tac looked around and stumbled across a short, young guy named Herman, interestingly wearing muddy Air Jordans and a long, grey shirt.

He said, “I don’t know but it looks like you might need some help. Could I get you a beer?”

Tac replied, “No thanks, man, I’m looking for Telly.”

Herman replied, “The way I see it is that you want

to have some fun, and Telly is the guy to help with that, am I right? He's my friend and the boss around here. I know him pretty well."

Tac accepted, "Yeah, that's about right."

Herman left, saying, "Got ya covered. I will find him and then join you."

Tac replied, "Sure, why not," with a hint of irritation.

Telly comes along out of nowhere and saves the gang.

"Herman was just here," Tac said to Telly. "We're set up over here."

Telly laughed and said, "Forget that, the party is inside. Everyone out here are scoundrels." The gang went inside and sat on a big, black leather couch. There were only about a dozen people inside this rather large house. Everything was neat.

Herman stumbled in and yelled, "Telly! I was looking for you for my partner here, but now I can hang, right?" as mud falls from his Jordans.

Telly responded, "Herman, watch the keg outside please because it's up to you to make sure those people out there don't drink everything!"

"Forget that, I'm not even watching it. They don't even like me."

Telly stood tall, stuck his chest out, and told Herman, "don't be a darn oddball!"

Herman shouted while walking out, "all yours."

The gang drank a few beers, and in their mind, they were living in some worry about that Herman guy walking in being weird. Tac walked outside, partially disturbed, put his hand on Herman, and told him, “what’s up?” His face grew big, and he seemed delighted.

Tac asked him, “wanna drink a shot together?” Herman swiftly grabbed the Jack Daniels, and, like a toast to the end of the night, they took a shot together and all was well.

Tac went back inside and Herman nonchalantly waved at him, and the guy was very calm. Tac began to wonder to himself in his half drunken state, “Herman aint that bad. Then again, I don’t really know the guy,” Tac pressed onto himself. “Who’s to judge, honestly? These are my boundaries, and it’s up to me to set them. I am adult enough to know what is what.”

The following day, Anderson started at Tac, “More crazy ideas of yours?”

Tac said, “No, because I don’t have crazy ideas. In fact some modern psychology comes from the simple principle of not intersecting too many ideas together. Biology is biology. History is history. The psychologist says.”

“Ok,” Anderson commented.

“My paper is on why people feel like they are victimized these days,” Tac explained to Anderson.

“It’s honestly for all types of reasons.”

“Like what?” Anderson asked.

“Well, people are just being pointed at for all sorts of things: homosexuality, skin color, tallness, adhd, etc,” Tac explained. “See, my solution is to help people realize that fear of the unknown is common, and they are being talked about or negated in a big way because they believe weird things, not because of those other qualities exactly.”

“What weird things?” Anderson continued.

“Weird things like destroyer asteroids, natural resource depletion, and more. See, these are ideas that are common, and changes happen here. The only problem is, people don’t get it. They think their ideas are original, when we all know that all ideas within months are acquired by someone else.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means that many people follow a path of zombie like orientations about this sort of stuff and leave it there. These zombies become ‘the other,’” Tac explained. “Which is ok, except that many of us need release from this sort of complex, or schema of life.”

Anderson nodded again and replied, “So you’re suggesting I should go watch Batman because that theater shooter thing is everyone’s idea and that I should not perpetuate this reality by making people feel weird about it?”

“Exactly! Lets all go watch Batman!” Tac sounded off.

Tac stuffed his work in his backpack and parted with Anderson. He stopped in front of his professors door and knocked respectfully.

Professor Milton answered, “Hi,” in a fresh and clear academic tone. “What can I do for you?” he asked.

Tac replied, “Well, I’m Tac. I’m in your psych 102 class, and my paper is due tomorrow, but would you mind looking it over, or atleast hearing my main premise?”

Mr Milton agreed, “Sure, come in.”

Tac told Mr Milton his premise, but Mr Milton just smiled. He was impressed with Tac’s motivation for learning and discovery.

Mr Milton explained, “Tac, just like in basic etiquette, there is a way for everything. If you wish to be an innovator, then great. But that is a hard road. There is another road people follow that might be called living formally or procedurally. People usually adapt to what is more normal and common. If they think different, then they think different, and so they are just being human; whatever. On the other hand, if those people applied everything they thought, they would lose adaptivity. You may be right, but adding up all that information seems a rocky road. And all this stuff is more common than

you might think.”

Tac listened carefully to Mr Milton and replied, “Thanks sir, I think I needed that. I get that just fine. I might want to stick around with humans for a little while longer, or atleast until they tick me off enough.”

Mr Milton laughed and said, “I’ll be looking forward to your paper!”

Tac left with a little hope left in him and went to the library to do some research. Tac thought hard about what his professor said and compiled information to balance the two opposing signals coming in. Adaption versus my idea, “I must be stupid!” Tac figured. “Maybe real change is harder than I thought,” he pondered.

As Tac was walking on the sidewalk to his apartment, there was a short Philipino man running down the street. It shocked and scared him very much.

A young male, maybe thirteen or fourteen, was screaming down the block, “My wallet!”

Tac was just in awe. He could barely move, nor breath well. Tac got back in shape and shook off the fear, then went into fight mode. Tac immediately dashed toward the guy, and ran in parallel with him, blocking escape routes, while the scenario was developing. Two security guards stopped the guy a block in and wrestled him to the ground. Tac was sort of proud of himself, but he didn’t really do that

much. The cops came and Tac told what he did. The cop was confused, but subtly acknowledged Tac's little brush with heroism.

The cop said, "That tactic is cool, but be careful, as it is up to law enforcement to undertake tactical defense and force application."

Tac replied, "I know what you mean, but it's the first thing I could think to do."

Tac walked away feeling good about himself and thought of other things he could have done, as the cop said. He pictured himself running to the kid and comforting him. He also pictured that once the man passed, he would hide. But that definitely is not who Tac was. He pictured himself more of a hero type.

As Tac got home, he was still in some shock, but very happy that it was not exactly the worst day ever. Tac sat in his garage, opened his laptop and searched, "Why criminals do what they do." He found loads of information, but he was particularly attracted to the idea of 'cognitive dissonance.' This is what happens when there are two conflicting situations at hand; sort of like ambivalence; the idea of having conflicting opinions in a situation. Tac thought back to a time when he had this, and remembered when Jack and his family got a restraining order on his uncle Mitch. He was a habitual lying type. The guy also made all the kids believe he was the real deal but his dreams pushed him to lie about his

wealth and education. This new knowledge made Jack and his family nuts, for they weren't exactly sure of the guy. This even made Jack's first cousin Chad nearly kill someone in a fight at one of Jack's parties. Chad's very own identity had a mystery man in it or something. Chad thought the guy was wrong, as the guy was displaying his disgust for old, wealthy white males. Chad stood up for his uncle Mitch, who was his and Jack's dad's brother. Chad hit him on the jaw so hard that the guy fell face first into the pavement, breaking teeth and bone. Tac eventually got upset at pondering this stuff and closed his laptop. He walked around to his front door, went in, and slept in his bed, thinking about all the bad things people do because of simple lies. It was another interesting day for grown up Tac.

Jerry, a college friend knocked on Tac's garage door the next day. There Tac was standing with no shirt, and dirty, tight, white sweat pants. Jerry asked, "What's up with all that?"

"Drilling."

"Drilling what?" Jerry responded smiling.

Tac went, "Well, drilling my new Ikea Craftstation," and smiled back.

"Awefully dirty for such a task, dontcha think?"

"Well, this is also California, and there just isn't enough man pride here in this arena. So, can I keep my balls please?"

“Sure, man. I just came over for help for next semester.”

“Ok, what do ya need.”

“Ok, so you know that class Social Systems and Communications with Lydia Grey? The prerequisite is a video recording of a particular social group in their social setting, depicting “social harmony.” It’s an Honors course this one.”

Tac looked at Jerry, smirked and said, “And you need a real man right?” Tac added, “And you must also need a group of men doing man stuff? Am I right?”

Jerry just smiled and asked Tac, “Can you help me or not?”

Tac replied, “I know just the person, but I haven’t spoken to her in awhile. Tac takes his smart phone out of his pocket and called his cousin Tysen.”

Tysen answered.

“Hey, this is Jack!”

“Tysen said, “What’s up homie! I miss your hot ass!”

Tac cracked with a loud laugh and corrected himself, “This is your cousin Tac!”

“What the hell Tac,” she cried.

“I didn’t know you two were still chatting?” Tac wondered.

“Yeah bro, Jack and I? We mad tight still. When he visited from Hawaii a few years back, we sort of

rekindled our friendship. But I heard he married a Hawaiian chick! Epic huuuhh?"

"Crazy."

"Anyway. My friend is doing a project, and I know you miss me so much! So you up for a get together with the old crew? I'll call everyone I can."

Tysen blurted out, "Heck yeah man. I'm hella down!"

"Great! How about next month, during Summer?"

"Absolutely. Just call me and I'll come down. I really miss you guys!"

Tac hung up with Tysen, and with a straight face, told Jerry with an eyebrow up, "Tell me I'm the man."

"You're the man!" Jerry hailed to Tac.

The next day, Tac began calling the old crew. He started by calling Travis.

"Yo," Travis answered.

"Hey buddy, it's Tac. I was just wondering if you were up for a little reunion with the crew?"

"How do ya mean?" Travis asked.

"Well, it's a long story, but aside from a project being involved, Tysen and I are super down. I was wondering if you have Devnel and Camron's contact?"

"I do not. Just Jack's. But if you're really down, I could message them on facebook. I have them as friends."

Tac sighed, "Yeah facebook. I have Devnel on

there, but he's never on. It's more like a Lakers support page."

Travis interjected, "Ok, well I'll try and get back to you tonight."

Fourty minutes later, Tac's phone was seemingly hit with malware, or even worse, online friends. Tac peeked at the facebook message and Travis started an online group chat.

Tac jumped in and said, "What the hell is up everyone?" Travis, Jack, Devnel, Camron, Trent, and Tysen, were all present. Tysen messaged, "Anything for my sweet cuz!" with a heart emoticon.

Devnel jumped in, "Dank, I'm there. Fo' them titty ho's."

Trent responded, "As long as there's no beer. Because Devnel's gonna hit me."

Devnel replied, "Don't worry bruddah. I eat and poop just like you do."

The board went silent for about an hour. Jack then hit everyone with a live video session.

Tysen messaged, "What, dude! Do I look like a slut to you?" Tysen joked.

Devnel jumped in looking tired and fat. Devnel sang into the camera, "To the window, to the wall!"

Jack jumped in, "And out my asshole!" Jack spoke into his camera to Devnel and shouted, "Great to see ya!"

"Yeah, man!" Devnel replied. "I heard you're living

it up out there and you're locked up with a Hawaiian feline!"

"Yes, indeed, it's great here. It's all gravy, and banana Jack's thinking about starting his own family clan, too."

Tysen popped up on screen looking very pretty.

Devnel yelled in childish anger, "Who said Jessica Alba could bust in on me when I be lookin' all wack?"

Everyone was live and Tac explained. "So my friend Jerry is doing a project and I thought it would be fun to get together with the old crew. I miss all of you and it would make my year if this went down."

"Just tell us when man," Devnel expressed to Tac.

"Well, if you all agree, maybe during Summer, which is next month. And seriously, where else would I ask to go then the wharf!"

Tysen responded on camera, "Ahem, boring."

Devnel attacked, "I thought you was about to say the cove, and now my excitement is plain gone... The pier? Might as well send me to some random ass beach park to just walk through."

Everyone lol'd.

Tac stopped in his tracks, "Well, I haven't put all the thought in the world into it, but honestly, I think that would be cool."

Jack ended the group chat after everyone agreed to go. "I'll send a digital postcard," Jack typed before ending the session.

Everyone lol'd again.

Good Times



A month had passed and Summer had arrived. The old crew were talking on the internet every so often. Everyone seemed to like Devnel more. He cheered everyone up. Jack made a lot of jokes with Tac about old times. Tac situated everyone at his parents house for the weekend.

Tac called up Travis, "Hey man, so we ready?"

Travis burped the words, "Ready, activate!"

Tac proceeded to bleep sounds, "Bleep, blorp, bloop." They both laughed big.

"Call them and tell them to just head to my parents place. Tell them that my old room is vacant and they can all put their stuff there. Also, tell them to wear good walking shoes, as I also want to chill around the area like old times, including the table," Tac relayed to Travis.

"Shoot."

They arrived one by one. Tysen showed up in a newer, white Toyota Corolla.

Tac had everything to say about it. "What, can't afford a 95 Sprint like me?"

Tysen smiled.

Trent showed up with Camron in a modern 4x4 Lexus. And finally Devnel came rolling up in an old, brown Chevy Cavalier. He parked down the road on the sidewalk and walked over in his big black hoody and baggy jeans, dancing like he always used to.

He sang, "I gotta dolla, I gotta dolla, I gotta dolla hey, hey, hey, hey," referring to the 100 dollar stash in his pocket and Buckwheat.

Jerry finally united with the crew as they were huddled in the front of Tac's parents house. Holding a new HD camera, he took a few pictures and introduced himself.

He said, "I'm doing a project to understand social groups. Since you're all close, Tac was willing to help me get into an Honors class. So don't mind me."

They all introduced themselves and offered him a beer.

Tac told the crew, "Let's get the hell outta here. It reminds me too much of underwear and teeth brushing." They all ran and skipped toward Tac and started to walk toward the jogging park to hit the table.

They get to the table and it's partially destroyed. El Nino must have done some damage to it they thought. It was however still standing.

Devnel jumped forward and said, "Yeah, El Nino. That was a big one!" He took out a dry grass from the bench and stuck in a joint. "Rest in peace my old friend."

Jerry shot video of their banter and took pictures of their old spots, which included many memories. They all made telling faces to each area as they took pictures: "Tac's Halloween vomit rock," "Jack's mission impossible to the soon-closing store, route," "Where Devnel punched Trent."

They made their way toward the wharf, the place they all knew Tac for. They all each had their moments with Tac there, too.

Trent, quite knowing of the area, asked Tac, "How do you feel about the new wharf?"

Tac answered, "I think it's dope. I think that I can no longer see what anyone would mean by this being something else. So thus, it's still the old wharf to me," Tac said smiling.

Trent replied, "I feel the same way."

Tysen shouted, "Show everyone the new marina, dude!"

Tac kept the atmosphere lively, "Well, that right there, everyone, is the digital interface to the marina. I can get us in. I have the password. We have a small

sport-boat parked at the end.” Tac brought the crew to the marina and they all go in.

Tysen yelled at a distance, “The dock is old and creaky, yeah, but check out their sitting area!” There were cool flame design sofas and a bathroom with showers.

Tac responded, “Yeah, we can chill here for a bit.”

The gang sat around the modern coffee table. Devnel took the only sofa chair, and started to roll joints for everyone, rapping, “Goin, goin, back back, to Cali, Cali.”

“Wow,” said Camron. “Never gets old eh?”

“Never,” Devnel replied, “Because it’s you time, which is primetime. So fat blunts.”

An old man in khaki Capris, beach sandals, and a french hat, sorta mixed-race looking, pulled up in a foldable marina bike.

He said, “You’re Tac aren’t you?”

Tac responded. “Yeah. You’re the owner of the Blue Horizon yacht, right?” He pushed forward a bit and looked at Tac, squinted, and asked, “You know about boats, right?”

Tac replied with a boyish “Yeh.”

“Come on over next week and see if you could help on deck. I am looking for a hand. A career even,” the old man said to Tac. He pushed forward a little more on his tiny bike, smiled, and said, “Sounds good?”

Tac thought about it for a second and replied,

“That sounds really great! Where do I sign?”

The old man said, “I’m Vinny. I’m old, and I need someone to take care of the boat. I remember you from around the harbor. You and your friends. I remember Trent and Travis, and the gang.”

Tac said, “Yeah we’re basically all here. Were helping with a college project.”

Vinny commented, “Well, I wish all of you luck on all you do and think nothing of it Tac if you decide not to come.”

Tac replied, “Alright. I’ll be sure to think about it.”

Vinny backed up and rode away on his tiny bike.

The rest of the night was chill, and a lot of banter went about the old gang. Everyone was stirred by Tac’s old demeanor and lifestyle, and they all seemed to miss it very much.

The next day came and all woke up with different moods. Devnel was happy to get up and sit on the patio to smoke a bowl. Trent was ready to get up, too, since he could help with any wharf stuff, as his dad was still over there.

Camron was more tipsy than everyone. He was the only one to go to the store. Which is very oldschool of him. Travis and Tac got up extra early with Jerry and made breakfast for everyone. Eggs and bell pepper, sausage, and toast. Tac was very excited that morning, since he rarely came down to the wharf anymore. Tysen stayed the sleeping

beauty, being the only girl having to comfort all her guy friends, and remain a girl. They all ate and Camron helped serve everyone their orange juice. They soon left the house, full, and ready to seize the day, relying on Tac and Trent for their harbor tour. They all had another awesome harbor day.

Tysen in her sweats started to jog, making fun of the fact they never jogged in the jog park. Devnel did a jog dance next to Tysen while the whole team laughed at their spontaneity.

Tac gulped and joined in, "Well I jog, but only at night to my dear pier!" and started running past Tysen and Devnel, unsure of his route.

Jerry was very entertained the whole time, and enjoyed their communication styles, critiquing them every once in a while by saying things like, "That's really funny." Or, "How in the world..."

The day was almost gone, and the sunset told the final tale of the gangs togetherness. The days was fun and packed full of old stories, jokes, and randomness. Tac wished all his old friends could see him for the adult he was, but he couldn't get it out exactly. He was Tac and Tac was cool. He also now had a yacht opportunity. That's all the gang had to know, since Tac was falling into life grabbing roses while most of them were grabbing lilies. Tac announced to the gang before they left that Sunday, "I love you guys. Or better, I hate you guys! What else is there?"

Hobbes? Not Calvin and Hobbes, Devnel. The legal one. Or illegal one,” Tac finished saying to the gang.

They all hugged and began to depart from each other, each driving off into the harbor night. Devnel was last to leave in his Cavalier, zipping around almost carelessly. He sped by, throwing his du-rag in the air, yelling to Tac, “Farewell Tac, my ocean friend!”

Beach Bums



T 'was a typical morning with the family; breakfast, morning chats, and the bright Brook sun lit up the day. Rory and Randy were drinking coffee at the back porch on the old cedar deck of the beach house as usual. Tac was about ready to head back to his apartment before he got a call from Travis.

“Ahoy there, mate. What you up to,” Travis began.

“Wild night. Better than beast, but not better than parents. Yep.”

“Oh, sure. Got ya. Anyway, yo so you’re heading this way at all? If so, let me know because I’m hanging out with... guess. Friggin’ Trent’s brother Parker. Yeah, duude. He’s cool. We were talking about our little gathering yesterday with his bro. He is like way over all that stuff from when we were kids. You know Parker, though. But, yeah, he’s my

neighbor now. He just moved in next door with his wife and kids. We're throwing back a few and heading to the beach with his fam and a few of our friends. You remember Jan, right? Yeah, her, and homefry Lorraine, and I are all meeting up at Pacific Beach Park at 11. Wanna meet up?"

"Sure. Sounds wicked. I'm just eating breakfast right now. The parents are being all Bourgeoisie on the porch. I'll be over in an hour at the most if anything, yeah?"

"Rad, bro. So like, just head to the beach because we're already packed up. We're all going in Parker's Humvee. It's this big black beast, yeah. So, see ya then. Oh, and bring swim clothes because like, Jan and Lorraine are likely going to want to get in, and no I'm not doing it alone; unless of course you agree to call me king Travis for a year and bow in my presence because that's wack. Otherwise, I need backup. I'm digging Jan a lot. Since that beast party, we've really been hitting it off."

"Sure, homie. I got your back. Don't worry. I'm pretty sure me and Lorraine are just going to argue about feminism and liberals."

"K, brah, see ya," Travis said as he hung up.

Nonstop it was in Brook Harbor, and another adventure was emerging in their wake. It was to be a good day. There were almost never bad days in Brook Harbor, as most of the people who

lived there were very formal, mature, and mostly healthy; which says a lot about people in Brook Harbor. That Vitamin D probably set them all off on a nutrition tangent, but that was the harbor life; low carbs, low fat, medium calorie, medium protein diets. A lot of bourgeoisie, but not so much as to be sociologically appropriated toward grandiose class warfare. Everyone in the town did their fair share and helped at the local town hall, schools, hobo jungles even, you name it. The consensus was that, America was the land of the free, and that was a social fact. Everyone was relatively beach bum slash hard worker. The two only mix in Brook Harbor, but stay like oil and water. Tac arrived at the beach five-till and saw Travis, Jan, and Lorraine, Parker and his family near the Humvee unloading. There was a canopy setup, a big bbq grill, a sound system, and plenty beach chairs for everyone. Tac got down from his Chevy Sprint and shouted to Parker, "longtime old friend. It's been ages. How are you?"

"You know. Family, work. I am an engineer. I went to Harbor Community and literally made it through Cal. I went for mathematics at first, and a biology minor, but I disliked all the blood and medical device stuff. I did Civil. I am part of Brook's development council. In fact, this very beach; it's a public beach. We're putting in a basketball court,

more restrooms, a new beach walk, and we're going to be leasing off a portion of it to a few sustainable operations. Yeah, all that pizzazz. By the way, this is my wife Kyrah. This is my son Peter, and that is my daughter Zalia."

"Nice to meet you all. You look like a lovely family. Yeah. I work at Brook Hardware, but I am taking up an offer soon for boat maintenance and upkeep. I'm heading over there this week to meet this guy Vinny. He owns that big yacht the The Blue Horizon. I'm hoping it all works out. I see Trent sometimes. I saw him just yesterday, in fact , but I haven't seen him in a few months. Work. I think he lives near that alley northeast of the park, right? In those older apartments."

"Yah, that's my bro. I go up there occasionally. He's really stapled to Brook Harbor. Like you. He tried moving up to Arizona for like six months; he hated it. He's way too beach bum. Haha! Me, too, though! We're all beach bums here up in this place, right?"

"I am, no doubt. Travis and Mrs shopaholic here are not just beach bums, though. They were promoted to 'beach punks.' That's because they never pay attention unless punk music comes on. Ask them a question. They'll stand there like seagulls." Lorraine hits Tac on the arm while Travis just grins as he helps take down the rest of the chairs. They

all head to their setup about a quarter of the way into the beach, which is about two hundred feet of sand until you hit the ocean. The white canopy sets an aesthetic that enlightens the day. Kyrrah and Jan's large hats also help to decorate the scene. They all have laid out their large beach towels and begin soaking in the sun as Parker puts in an Offspring CD. Travis breaks the ice with Jan, finally, after having taken down all the stuff from the Humvee with but two words in. His suave harbor grace, however, becomes apparent when he asks if Jan wants to take a dip.

"Down to get in? Here, I'll take you," as he double legged her, setting her over his shoulder.

She agreed, screaming, "Ahh, ok," laughing as Travis ran her to the shore. Travis was looking extra handsome, and funky, that day, too, with his blue island print tank, sideways flex fit cap, and bright red Billabong shorts. Her red two piece, and attitude, matched his vibe and they looked perfect together on the sunny beach.

Tac sat there with Lorraine and they started chatting like they often did when they met up. Tac and Lorraine, being old high school pals from Colter High, were sorta the cutest 'noncouple' there was. They did date. Once. But, their friendship was so intertwined with people both of them knew that they decided to just stay friends. There was too

much at stake. Plus, Tac was all about the boat game and not so interested in anything else. Lorraine was different, however. She always enjoyed Tac's company, and every now and then she would ask Tac what it would have been like if they went steady. Tac always answered with a joke of some sort. Often, he would just perversely make big lips and force himself on her. She thought this was cute, but Tac never budged. He respected the opposite sex as anyone and his style was exquisite. Lorraine and Tac sat in the sand as Parker and his family sat in a circle near the canopy. Lorraine was wearing a two piece bikini; a navy blue top and baby blue bottom. Tac poked Lorraine in the arm and joked, "Ya actually wore a bikini. I thought you just leave the ton of bikinis in your underground lair."

"Oh hush, Tac. I wear em all the time. I definitely passed on like twenty different sets, though, sure. What if someone needs to borrow? I can help."

"You say that now but I bet if Jan asked you'd probably just give her your mom's old g-string, hah!"

"My mom's g-string would look perfect on her."

"You need to go to the mall and get yourself a self restraining order."

"If I did that then I would just break the law."

The two laughed the day away talking about shopping, politics, and the harbor while Travis and Jan were enjoying their little beach romance. As it

reached midday, they all gathered around the table to eat as Parker and his wife finished up the bbq and fixings. Everyone was hungry and ready to eat.

“Get at it; lunch is served. Dig in. Got ribs, chicken, potato salad, burgers, hotdogs; go for it. Eat up. And Tac, you gotta try this fish.” Parker handed a small bbq’d flat fish to Tac as everyone knew Tac liked seafood the most. Tac forked a piece.

“Mmm, that’s good. What is it.”

“That my friend is marina Flounder from our restaurant. My dad is part owner now. He really worked his way up. We sell a lot of this stuff there, as you might know.”

“Yeah, I go there with the fam on holidays, but I haven’t been back in years. It’s delicious. I’ll be sure to keep you guys in mind when I go up to see my parents.”

“No worries, bro. Anyway, you guys eat all you can eat. Some of the guys are coming through. Don’t worry; they’re my coworkers. They’re harmless. That other life is way behind me, anyway,” Parker explained. They all sat around the canopy and ate while listening to bands like Smashmouth, Nirvana, and Snot. They all were full and untalkative when Parker’s friends showed up, one of them carrying a sandboard, the other two had beach equipment; frisbees, a football, a big beach ball. They also had an ice cooler filled with beer and wine coolers. Parker

introduced them to everyone, "This is my good friend Lucas from work and these are his cousins Kai and Dante." The gang introduced themselves and they spent the rest of the day drinking and playing on the shore: sand surfing, playing catch and football, and generally enjoying the day. Parker spent half his time with the boys, but was a perfect family gentleman throughout, even though he still had that same sorta aggressive aura a little from high school. He was even bigger now, too, especially in comparison to his short wife, who was at best five-four and a hundred and thirty pounds. Parker was atleast two hundred and built like a wrestler. The day reached evening and the red sky reflected off the waters in a beautiful way. The crew was tired and all pretty drunk from all the beer that Lucas brought. As they all took their things to the parking lot and loaded up their cars, the guys chatted and bantered for a while in the parking lot. Travis started, "Friggin' awesome. Couldn't have been better, unless we all just went straight to the strip club after. Any takers? Heh? Ok!" Travis stopped with a straight face.

Kai jumped in, "I work all damn day. I needa get out more. Plus, we stare at this place all the time, but then go to the office and work with city planners. I just want to front flip into the water like a crazy man sometimes."

"I'm the opposite. I go to the beach and stare at

society. It's not as great as it sounds. It's a beach bummy thing," Tac joked.

"I'm such a beach bum that I can't even go to the beach anymore without seeing an old girlfriend. I have it all planned out. So you don't look so awkward, ya know, because you want to look impressive, right, just bring toys and balls and stuff. It like does everything," Dante explained in surfer refinement.

Tac shot back in a nerdy tone, "Even better; snorkels." They all laughed and proceeded to end their evening banter session. "Cool Tac, nice meeting ya," Kai said as he was walking away with Dante and Lucas. "By the way, Parker was telling me you're into boats. Well, if you're ever available, I got an old sailboat at the marina. If you're down, it doesn't start, and I know next to nothing about that stuff. If anything, I turn it on and I just aim at girls or dolphins, haha."

"Yeah, sounds fun. I'm definitely willing to check it out," Tac assured Kai.

"Cool bro, have a great night, man."

"You, too," Tac said in farewell. Jan and Lorraine left in their car after everyone said their goodbyes. Tac and Lorraine bumped fists and peaced out as always and everyone went their separate ways.

The Shipyard



Tac awoke suddenly after dreaming about a giant octopus that took over Brook Harbor. Its tentacles and suction cups were hovering its body in a sort of bravery as it climbed over the Brook mountains. Two helicopters were surrounding the monster after it almost knocked one out of the sky. Tac was sweating but smiled after realizing how ridiculous it was. It was weird growing up near the ocean. Tac sat up, ran his fingers through his overgrown bummy hairdo, which was touching his upper back already, and proceeded to make breakfast. It was Monday and he had work at 10 am, so he usually ate breakfast and sat around fully changed until time came. He was to drive to the marina after work at around 5 pm. He wanted the gig so bad, you could see it in the way he conducted himself. Tac headed off to work at Brook Harbor

Hardware and worked the day as a competent employee. His first task was troubleshooting a broken faucet. Tac's mechanical skills could be seen as second-to-none just being present as he fixed things. It took him five minutes his first customer, found the right part, a sink system, replaced the old part, and screwed it all together and wiped it down. The man was delighted and told Tac he had never seen anyone fix something so fast.

"Yep, just a cracked ball valve and some rust. The parts will be 7.50, and the labor, just gimme ten bucks and we'll call it even."

"Oh my, here's twenty. Keep the change. And, oh boy, you have such a great skill. I will tell all my friends to come by," the elderly man said as he took his bag.

Tac went about his usual day, fixing little problems, cleaning the store, and checking people out. As it was nearing closing time, he started dancing in the aisles with his broom, making his coworker Lambert laugh, who was the store's bookkeeper and delivery driver. The boss, a sixty year old, skinny veteran of the army, did logistics mostly, some deliveries, and would stop by the store throughout the day. He had an ectomorphic body but an oversized waistline. He barked when he talked. His name was even aggressive; Tanner Bolicki, previously known as Sargent Bolicki. He called via two way

communications to Tac's radio and demanded, "Tac, hey. We have to go. I have plenty things to do. You can work overtime? Margerette is coming in late. I cannot mess this up. I have another package to deliver."

Tac slowed in his excitement and picked up the walkie talkie and said, "yuhp. Got it. I can stay."

"That's great Tac muh boy. That's why I like you. Ok. Meet me around back. We have a pallet of power tools out here."

Tac went on and did his job with almost no intention of getting to the marina by 5 to meet Vinny. Lambert was observing Tac as Tac was looking relatively somber, and said to Tac, "Go ahead. I'll cover for you, bro. Margerette owe's me bigtime for all those times she came in late. I'll make sure that the boss doesn't know you left right away. I'll call Margerette to get here now. Go for it."

"What? You're my hero Lambert! Thanks a ton. I really wanted to get to that gig today for sure."

"No problem, Tac." Tac went on his way, rushed out the door and walked swiftly toward his car, hopped in, and sped off the lot. He arrived at the marina just in time. Most boaters at the marina closed up shop around 6. This meant they went into their cabins from whatever they were doing on deck. Tac walked down the pier in his work clothes and reached The Blue Horizon, which towered over him

as he looked around the captains seat for Vinny. Tac called for Vinny, "Sir, you there." Vinny stuck his head threw an open circular window from the cabin near the front of the ship. "Tac, I'm glad you could make it. Go to the back. I'll let you on through the rear."

"Sounds great." The two met, and talked about Tac's boat experience, eventually making their way to the engine room. Vinny and Tac walked into a small one hundred and fifty square foot space and Vinny gave Tac an amused face. "So Tac... What do ya know about these?" This was Tac's chance to prove he really knew what he was doing. He gave it his best shot.

"Absolutely, sir. That's the generator right there next to the fuel filters, looks like about 10,000 liters, 4,000 HP, two Cat 8 cylinder diesel engine's, with, it looks like low pressure fuel injection, beautiful I might add, and yeah, all looks great. There's the stabilizer. I've never got to work with this type of setup much, but I can definitely manage."

"Are you forgetting something? Can ya make out the fuel consumption?"

Sure, maybe two hundred liters per hour I might guess."

"That's amazing Tac. Almost. About two-fifty. I can go almost two thousand miles nonstop."

"That's so far. Where have you been?"

“I’ve taken the horizon all over the world. I traversed the Atlantic last year, but that’s not something that I can keep doing at my age. There’s upkeep and navigation, dispatch, and a whole host of things I must pay attention to for those journeys. Well, Tac, you’re definitely as knowledgeable as they say you are. What do ya say I start you out as a deck hand? Are you working at the hardware store still?”

“I sure am. What do you have in mind?”

“Throughout the week, it would be great if you could stop by maybe before and after work. How much are you making now?”

“I’m making about ten bucks an hour at the store. I get commission from repairs, too. That brings in a few hundred a month.”

“I’ll tell ya what. I’ll give you a base salary of a thousand per month and you can keep your job. If you ever decide to leave, I can match your work salary, plus the base pay.”

“What? I’m in shock. I can’t thank you enough! It would be a pleasure, sir. Thank you for the opportunity. I always wanted to be a part of a real boat operation.”

“Absolutely. Most of the service issues will deal with refueling, environmental control, washing, a little bit of diving, as well as computer tests I run about once a week. Usually the problems are small, but engine issues do occur. I have taken the boat to

her last days, so it can be seen, heard, and felt, but she still toots like a beauty.” That day, Tac went home feeling like a real man. After all of his hard work and his good deeds, he has landed his dream job as a part time deck hand on a hundred foot luxury yacht. It was a day to remember. It was Tac growing up.

Home



Tac Went back home to Brook Harbor to visit that night to tell his parents the good news. He talked to his parents all night, telling them about how cool the boat was. Tac's dad Randy rooted him on as he always did, in full support, as his kid was becoming a man. The money increase would allow Tac to live a better life, pay his loans and credit cards, and be a better son to his parents. Rory and Randy were very pleased and told Tac that he could stay the night and go home in the morning. Rory was always worried for Tac being out too late, too. She told Tac, "It's way too late. I don't want you driving out there at this time. You don't work until 10. I'll wake you up, k? What time do you have to be at the boat?"

"It's a base pay thing, mom. I'm going to be showing up probably around 8 am. It gives me more than an hour everyday to check the systems, log the

information, and clean up a bit. Then I can head off to work at around 9:45.”

“Oh my baby. I’m so proud of you. You’re achieving your dream, honey! Wait till the family hears about this. They know you’re so smart. K, honey, I will wake you up at around 6:30. You go to bed. You and Von’s old room is all yours if you want of course. You can sleep there, but the couch, oh my, we bought it from Ikea. It is the most comfortable couch ever. It won awards.”

“K, mom, I’ll watch TV for a bit and crash. Thanks for everything. And yes, please wake me up in time. I can’t miss tomorrow.” Rory woke Tac up the next morning and gave him a paper bag of food and gave him a big kiss on the cheek. He found some of Von’s old clothes and showered and brushed there, and went straight to the marina as it was just down the road. Tac had the boat keys already from the previous night. He opened up the cabin and started his first day in boat operations. It was beautiful inside. Vinny wasn’t there and it was very clean. Tac didn’t have to do anything except check the systems, so he logged the data, checked fuel levels, started up the computer to try the software, and he was done. Tac sat in the captains seat near the controls and easily worked out the basics. Tac was in heaven. He wanted to be responsible, though. It was his chance to do everything right. It was as if he was in a

heightened state of awareness and mindfulness, and he made no mistakes. He remembered all those years of how the boat industry worked procedurally, and so he followed the theories perfectly; he followed protocol. He made his first move. He sat as a deckhand would sit, occupied the co captains chair, and operated the yacht with minimalism in mind. Most boat folk were interested in formalities but more so in regard to quasi minimalist factors it seemed. Life was already complicated for them. They figured why not simplify things into simple parts that align with the basic theories. That's what Tac did, but he did it like Tac and noone else. Tac went to work that day with a more refined attitude. While at his day job, he was more energetic and positive. Tac's step changed and so did all those around him. That week Tac decided to call Lorraine and follow his wins. He was living his dream, and now all he needed to complete his being was Lorraine. Tac lived in denial the whole time, but that's just Tac. That's how Tac is. However, Tac was a springboard, a champion, a master of timing. It was the right time. Tac did his day to day and learned the ropes fast. When Friday approached, right after Tac was finished with his routine maintenance, he decided to try and win Lorraine's heart.

"Hello."

"Hey, Lorraine, It's Tac."

“Sup. How’s it loser?”

“Fine. Actually. I didn’t call to tell you what you don’t already know. You damn well know you’re a butt, but I want to ask if you want to go out tonight?”

“Oh my, what will I wear?” she joked. She continued, “Really? Why now?”

“It’s why not now. I don’t know. My life is missing something and that something is you, I feel.”

“I’d love to.”

“I’ll pick you up right now. What do you say?” Tac asked as confident as he could.

“Sure. I’m just here at muh crib... Chillin’.”

“K, be I’ll there. Wait for me.” Tac jumped in his Sprint. In five minutes time he arrived at the front curb of her apartment about a mile from the marina. She was standing there in a big grey sweater and capris. Her blush was so magnificent that it changed the emotional environment the instant they laid eyes on eachother. Both of their smiles grew big. He nearly climbed to her up the steps, took her hand, and put her in the passenger seat. He brought her to the marina, with the permission of Vinny, and brought her inside the yacht, in full realization of the magnitude of his actions. When Lorraine turned her head into the cabin, there was a single Rose sitting on the co captains chair, which cued Tac to move in as he grabbed it and gave it to her. She nearly cried, and hugged Tac passionately. She kissed Tac

for the first time since they last dated. Tac brought her to the main deck where there was a spread of caviar, white wine, and a delightful small dinner with the utensils in formal order. They talked the night away, and it was at this point that they realized the playing was over, and that their fight was in fact a sustained passion. A force between them that was held together by the strength of their love.

“I love you, Tac.”

“I love you.”

“No, I mean it.”

“I mean it, too, Lorraine. You’re the best.” Tac gripped her hand and brought her to the side deck to see the glimmering city lights and to listen to the soft crashing waves that he grew up loving so much. They held each other in warm embrace and whispered something like love songs into each other’s ear. Tac was happy. The most happy. Tac had a good day.

The end.

Thanks for reading!

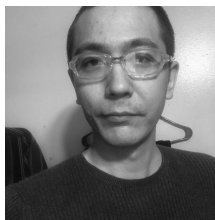


Notes



Notes





About the Author



Jeffrey Toves was born and raised in Ventura, CA, moving around as he was growing up. He learned about computers early on and became interested in media, creating music and graphic designs as a teenager. He published music as a member of ASCAP, joining in 2008, and also pursued an interest in writing, joining the Authors Guild in 2021, beginning with his books *Modicum* and *Brook Harbor*. Toves attended Excel High School, graduating in 2010. Toves also has a passion for computers, design, and entrepreneurship.

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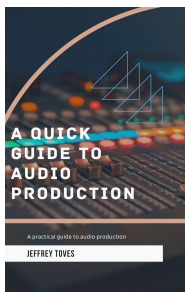
You can find Toves's books on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Smashwords, and other major retailers.



Modicum: An Analysis of Corruption and Man

Behold the power of Modicum, a quick and immersive introduction to the fundamentals of academic thought, modern philosophy, history of ideas. In just an hour, you'll do what it takes other books days to do—get a great overview of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Zeno, Jung, Maslow and more. What are you waiting for?

In this book, we stroll through the undercables of society through academia so as to attempt to get to grips with corruption in the world. We explore themes such as Maslow on corruption in history, philosophy and theology ideas, modern psychology, evolution, and tons more. Modicum is a short and sweet text in simply discussing corruption and the history of man in a modern context. There is no book like it, and it is a joy to read, as it also goes through the basics of evolution in biology and technology so as to become better aware of modern technological and scientific corruptions going on in the deep nets of complex society.



A Quick Guide to Audio Production

Stop now, you've found your guide; and it's not your average guide! Here in it's updated form, A Quick Guide to Audio Production will take you, quickly, through the world of audio, and help you understand all the bits and pieces that go into creating, editing, mixing, and mastering good audio.

Author, and longtime audio technologist, Jeffrey Toves takes you on a journey through the world of audio in as simple and direct way as possible. The ideas are taught conversationally, and even the most difficult topics are deduced into simple parts to help readers understand. This book is like no other and it is the quickest way from having no knowledge to having pro knowledge, guaranteed.

